

Port Politics: Indian Seamen, Australian Unions and Indonesian Independence, 1945-47

Heather Goodall*

Key words

Indian seamen, Australian maritime unions, Indonesian independence, boycott, Netherlands East Indies, colonialism, Indian Seaman's Union in Australia (ISUiA)

In September 1945 a boycott of Dutch shipping in Australian waters was called in support of the Indonesian declaration of independence at the end of World War II. Inspired by the Atlantic Charter, a new decolonised world seemed possible. It was working people of Australia, Indonesia and India who co-operated in the boycott and attempt to win freedom not only in Indonesia but also in India. This article compares the Australian accounts of the boycott with Indian perspectives, found in the records of the Indian Seamen's Union in Australia and in oral histories of Australian activists who supported the Indians in this boycott. This comparison demonstrates that the Indian seamen played a substantial role in the practical implementation of the boycott, as it was they, not Indonesians or Australians, who were the main body of seamen obstructing the departures of the black-banned ships. The article asks why the Indian story has been absent in the Australian accounts to date and locates the sources of that marginalisation in the assumptions and stereotypes developed over a century of hierarchical and competitive colonial labour practices. The boycott which seemed to be about the end of colonialism was nevertheless shaped by and remembered within the constraints of that colonialism.

Comparative or Transnational?

The boycott of Dutch shipping in Australian waters, called to support the Indonesian declaration of independence in August 1945, held for nine months and continued intermittently over four years. It delayed 559 vessels including 36 Dutch merchant ships, three Royal Australian Navy vessels and two British troopships. The story has been told in Australia as a triumphal account of Australian unions breaking out of their old racist limitations as they responded to a call by Indonesian nationalists for independence and freedom, for *Merdeka!*¹ Yet the real story is about interactions between working people of three emerging nations, Australia, India and Indonesia. Each was struggling to decolonise but their relationships were shaped by the continuing effects of colonialism.

There are benefits to considering labour history comparatively,² but this study is transnational rather than comparative because we need to understand the interactions *between* these groups of working people rather than simply to compare their conditions within their own countries. The unfolding events which occurred as they crossed paths and tried to communicate open up questions about the meanings of 'nationalism' and 'internationalism' for working-class people in that brief period of hope after the end of World War II, when colonialism seemed to be in its death throes but when the horrors of Partition and the bitter polarisations of the Cold War were still barely imagined.

This article focuses particularly on Indians and Australians in Australia as the first part of a broader project into the interactions between the three groups, based on an archive of the Indian Seamen's Union in Australia (ISUiA).³ The Indians played a key role in initiating and sustaining this strike, yet their story has been lost from view while the Indonesian role has continued to circulate in Australian accounts. Julia Martínez has found a similar anomaly in her study of the journal of the Seamen's Union of Australia (SUA) in the 1920s where, despite the union's

commitment to internationalism, she found a hierarchy of attitudes to seafarers of different races.⁴ The following analysis of the 1945 boycott confirms there was a persistent misrepresentation of Indian seamen but at the same time it opens insights into the challenges mounted by the Indians themselves and by their Australian supporters.

Intersecting Colonial Histories

There are similarities in the histories of Indian and Australian seafarers although they are seldom acknowledged in either national historiographies. Each shared a similar experience of isolation when actually on board ships, under what remained a feudal and brutal regime of control in which individual seamen had little opportunity for collective action.⁵ They both used non-confrontational strategies ranging from individual resistance to collective action on land, usually at home ports, to try to manoeuvre for some industrial advantage before they contracted to go into the hostile conditions at sea.⁶ Finally they shared a common experience of union support in their home countries. Australian maritime unions, of both seafarers and port workers, were strongly active in the 1880s but by the 1920s, like the Indian unions, they were divided and hemmed in with hostile legislation. In Australia, these unions regained unity and strength through advantageous legislation late in the 1930s. In India, although the two major ports, Bombay and Calcutta, operated with very different conventions and practices, by 1928 both had strong seafarers' unions with rank-and-file leadership.⁷ Both countries therefore entered the war with strengthened maritime unions. The conditions of warfare, while endangering many seafarers' lives, also allowed their unions to become stronger still because the wartime dependence of their labour gave them a little leverage to demand higher wages to cover war-related dangers.⁸

Australian Perceptions

Yet if there were similarities in the internal histories of the maritime workers of these two countries, there were few similarities in their colonial histories. Their interactions were, in almost every case, hierarchical, competitive or hostile, arising from their divergent relations to their common coloniser, Britain, and global colonial economies. This meant that each side carried expectations and assumptions into later meetings. Australians, as settlers of European descent strongly influenced by Chartism and the emergence of British unionism, assumed that they would improve on British working conditions and organisational structures. This was the 'labour' variant of settler colonialism and it had as distinct a racial border. While Australia was largely dependent on shipping from Calcutta early in its colonial period, the rising employment of Indian and Chinese seamen as crew in the rapidly expanding steam shipping industry in the later nineteenth century was seen by Australian seafarers as direct competition. Indians and Chinese were signed on by the British companies at rates and conditions far less advantageous than those which were being offered to Australian seamen. A series of contracts known collectively as 'Asiatic Articles' had been developed since the later eighteenth century aimed partly at limiting the movement of seamen hired in Asia so they could not freely enter into or stay in Britain or other ports. From the 1820s these articles explicitly restricted wage rates to ensure commercial advantage to the shipping lines and from the 1890s they limited the geographic range of employment of 'lascars' to the tropical and subtropical latitudes, to restrict competition with European seamen.⁹ Despite various forms of challenge, the weight of the colonial governments ensured that these regulations, were very hard to shift. In 1922, for example, a prolonged battle by Indian seamen's unions to improve their conditions was defeated when their wages were standardised at 10 per cent to 15 per cent below those of the highest rates paid to British seamen.¹⁰

Australian unions supported Australian-owned shipping companies in arguing for the exclusion of non-Australian [mostly British] shipping companies, with their foreign-signed 'coloured' crews, from the coastal and Australia-New Zealand routes, a goal eventually won in the Navigation Acts of 1921.¹¹ Burns Philp, an Australian company trading along the Melanesian islands and on to Singapore, was allowed an exemption in employing 'coloured' labour, but the

SUA regarded it with suspicion, maintaining pressure on it to change its practices and cease employing 'Asiatic crews'.¹² Australians joined British seafaring unions in blaming Indian seamen for the exploitative conditions imposed by British shipping companies and supported by the Raj. Both British and Australian unions drew on the distorted use of the Persian-derived term, *lascar*, originally simply a description of the occupation of ordinary seaman. It became a racialised and denigratory term for 'coloured labour', in particular that of seaman of Indian origin, who were characterised as weak, submissive and disinterested in challenging the bosses. Constructed as the enemy in the triumphal narrative of Australian maritime union histories, these 'coloured seamen' were barely noticed as fellow workers with social relationships and industrial interests.¹³

This view of Indian seamen developed in the broader context of Australian awareness of the course of British colonialism in India, especially the episodic famines which occurred as this rising population faced the economic dislocations when British interventions shifted the economy to cash crops and plantations. The colonial management of labour by indenture had developed in the mid-nineteenth centuries as a substitute for slavery and remained a widely used strategy for controlling workers.¹⁴ There had been a major campaign against the introduction of indentured Indian labourers into New South Wales in the 1840s and the use of indenture for the control of Chinese, Japanese and Melanesian workers was so high in the attention of Australian unions that it was specifically outlawed in the labour laws of the new Federation after 1901. Australians saw themselves as having won the battle against indentured labour, despite its continuation within the pearling industry and in the management of Aboriginal children and adults for decades. Yet it was Indian workers who carried the lingering opprobrium of indenture into the twentieth century.

As steam travel became the major form of transport for touring Europeans, the dazzling technology and the increasingly racialised hierarchy of the staffing structure ensured that the many passengers were little aware of the non-European crews who worked below decks. The hierarchical cultures of empire consolidated that impression, which pervaded the consciousness of Australian historians and travel writers, who have failed to see that a major proportion of the international shipping crews who passed through Australian ports throughout the twentieth century were Indian.¹⁵ We can gain a sense of the scale of this employment from the scattered figures in reports or inquiries. Indian seamen embarking on all vessels just from Bombay in 1814 and 1816 can be conservatively estimated from the British census of the city to have been around 70,000.¹⁶ Many worked on British lines sailing in the Indian Ocean and these numbers increased after 1860 as the trade expanded with the introduction of steam. In 1891, 24,000 Indian seamen were believed to make up 10 per cent of all those seamen working on British lines. By 1914 the numbers had risen to 52,000 Indians who formed 17.5 per cent of all British employed seamen. In the 1937 *Census of Seamen* suggested that the overall labour force had diminished but that the proportion of Indians had risen. Nearly 44,000 Indian seamen were said to have been employed on British lines in that year, making up over 27 per cent of the seamen working on British lines.¹⁷

These seamen were almost as invisible to Australian unions as they were to liner passengers. Of all the Australian maritime unions, only the syndicalist IWW (International Workers of the World), known as the Wobblies, attempted to organise and incorporate these non-European seamen into their union.¹⁸ Martínez has documented the emergence of some knowledge in the SUA during the 1920s of union activity among Indian seamen, a recognition stimulated through ILO (International Labour Organisation) contacts. But the SUA concern was usually pragmatic, characterising Indians and 'Asiatic labour' as a 'problem' and demonstrating little of the empathy which Martínez argues might underpin a 'community' of labour. In general, the Indian unions were depicted as immature and in need of Australian tuition and advice rather than the solidarity of comradeship. The wharfies or dockside workers, many in small unions which were increasingly amalgamated with the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF), had less direct contact with Indian seamen and so they continued to have little awareness at all of industrial developments in India.¹⁹ The White Australia Policy had by this time effectively isolated Australians including Australian unionists and the Left from the political concerns of colonised peoples in the region.

Indian Perceptions

The prejudices which shaped Australian perceptions of their encounters with Indian seamen are evident, but what did Indians bring to these encounters? Firstly, experience of political mobilisation through unions in India was a strong influence to which seamen's letters and statements often refer. By 1939, the Indian seafarers' unions were under effective rank-and-file leadership with Ibrahim Serang in Bombay and Aftab Ali in Calcutta. As Muslims, both Serang and Ali shared their religious and community affiliation with a high proportion of their members, but these unions remained culturally-mixed organisations, representing Christian, Sikh, Hindu and Islamic seafarers and were organisations which retained a broad syndicalist commitment to a secular and socialist view of politics. Their powerful joint advocacy of Indian seamen's interests at the 1936 ILO meeting in Geneva was a critical factor in reuniting the maritime unions which had been divided on ideological lines so that by the outbreak of war, the industry had one of the highest degrees of unionisation in India.²⁰

Balachandran has documented Indian seafarers' collective assertion to exert control over their working conditions long before the unions came into existence. Crews often used the withdrawal of their labour from violent or exploitative masters prior to contract, particularly in home ports but also in some overseas ports like those in the United Kingdom. Balachandran argues that because of their political vulnerability away from home, in colonial conditions, the Indians focussed on conflicts over contractual conditions like demands to transfer between ships or between ports, where they could defend their actions legally.²¹ His depiction of a politically aware and strategically assertive body of seamen is supported by Tabili's research on Indian seafarers who had become resident in English port communities.²² These tactics can all be traced in the Australian events. Martínez identified an important but isolated incident resulting in communication between the SUA and Indian sailors. In Melbourne in 1923, Indian seamen walked off a ship to protest a transfer they argued was against the terms of their contract. They were jailed, not once but twice and received assistance which they had not expected from the SUA in the struggle in which they eventually won their demands to be repatriated to India.²³ Rather than being the isolated incident it appears from the Australian records, however, this example accords exactly with the type of strategic, collective action framed in terms of contractual legalities which Balachandran has described as being widely used by Indian crews, particularly in the UK. The events in Australia in the 1940s were to demonstrate Indian seafarers again taking collective action but this time with even more confrontational strategies.

Secondly, Indians did not approach Australia as unknown territory. Instead, they had had decades of knowledge of the ways in which Australian policies had discriminated racially and religiously against Indians and Afghanis. There was a network of print and personal communication between Indian communities and the South Asian diaspora of labourers and traders in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Australia.²⁴ The discriminatory legislation in both South Africa and Australia against Afghanis and Indians had provoked widespread comment in the Indian press from the 1890s to the 1920s. Perhaps more importantly for the seafaring communities was the fact that much of the settler hostility in Australia was directed at Muslim Afghanis, and so the news about Australia had circulated widely along local and popular religious networks particularly in cities like Bombay and Calcutta but also in the rural areas from which many indentured and migratory labourers, as well as the seamen, had come.²⁵ The seamen thus brought with them a well formed set of expectations about Australian attitudes towards them.

Finally, although we have as yet less information available on the relations between Indian and Indonesian seafarers during the 1940s, there are some indications of the range of interactions which may have occurred. Indian seamen had been in increasing contact with Indonesians over the previous decades as Indonesians had begun to travel across the Indian Ocean more frequently to complete the Hajj pilgrimage.²⁶ Strong religious motivation meant that Indonesians of all classes made this journey, sometimes travelling in steerage and even working their passage. Given the high proportion of Muslims among Indian seamen, and particularly among members of the seafarers' unions,²⁷ it is likely that militant Indian seamen were far more familiar with Indonesians than they

might have been with other South East Asian populations like the predominantly non-Muslim Thais.

Yet while affiliations generated by Islam may have been bringing Indians and some Indonesians closer together in shipboard environments from the 1870s, there were solidifying class divisions which were dividing them. Indonesian seamen had been in Australia in significant numbers after the fall of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) to Japan. Molly Bondan has explained the class tensions between the Indonesian petty officers of the Dutch shipping line, KPM who were predominantly Manadonese Christians from Sulawesi and the Javanese who made up the majority of Indonesian ordinary seamen and who had set up an Indonesian Seamen's Union in Australia. Both were intensely interested in an end to Dutch colonialism, but they took rather different routes in their political interactions with the Dutch.²⁸ Where Indians were employed on KPM lines they were invariably in the heavier and non-elite roles. Racialised divisions within the stratified world of the ship's workers were a common experience, as Ewald has described.²⁹ In the eastern Indian Ocean, on the lines trading between and around India, Indonesia and Australia, there appear to have been very few Indians among the upper strata of the ship's officers but Indonesians, and particularly the Manadonese, were frequently found to be filling the petty officers roles.³⁰

Black Banning Dutch Ships 1945-47

The Story as Australians Have Told It

The accounts of the key participants in the boycott diverge significantly. The story circulating in Australia has been substantially the one told by the Australian unions, which foreground the Australian role in decision making and impact. The history of the Seamen's Union, published in 1981, defined the issues for Indonesians and Indians as essentially industrial ones like wages and it characterised the two groups very differently. The Indonesians were depicted as beginners who needed to be instructed by the Australians about how to run a decent campaign and how to be good unionists. The Indians were described at best as late-comers to the strike and of only marginal importance.³¹ At worst, they were denigrated as scabs and as 'a motley crew as lascars' who willingly sailed those Dutch ships which did leave port in early contravention of the bans.³² The book assumes that the Indians' motives were only ever better wages or conditions. A more recent account of the strike is in the Waterside Workers' Federation history, published in 1996. It acknowledges the political nature of the boycott for everyone involved but argues that the strike was inspired and directed by the Waterside Workers. This was represented as a major shift in Australian union attitudes but the Indians and the Indonesians were depicted as marginal players who had taken no initiating role in generating this shift.

The third analysis has been Rupert Lockwood's, *Black Armada*, was written from personal recollection and extensive interviews with participants, although not published until 1982. Lockwood was a journalist who had a long association with the maritime unions and in 1945 was a member of the Communist Party of Australia [CPA]. He spent time with Indians in 1945 and acknowledged their presence in the boycott far more than the union histories did. Furthermore, he recognised the very strong political motivations as well as the industrial concerns motivating both the Indians and Indonesians. Lockwood (and certainly the two union histories) were informed by but also shaped by the 1946 film *Indonesia Calling* made by the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens, himself member of the Communist Party.³³ This film has carried an eye-witness authority because *looks* like documentary yet much of its footage was re-enactment rather than live film of events. It requires careful reading because its tight editing and scripted voice-over offer a narrative which is often contradicted by the visual record it displays. Both Lockwood and Ivens depict the Indians as recently arrived and describe them as if they had been brought to Australia only when needed to replace striking Indonesian crews. While Lockwood's book recognised the substantial contribution made by the Indians, it nevertheless placed them in a marginal role in the boycott.

Common Ground

All these Australian accounts do agree that the unprecedented Australian response to the Indonesian call for support arose from the presence of so many highly politicised Indonesians in exile in Australia in the preceding three years. When the Netherlands East Indies [NEI] fell to Japan in 1942, the Dutch evacuated to Australia but so too did many Indonesian seamen crewing merchant vessels and other Indonesians who had served the Dutch administration. The Dutch brought as well many long term political prisoners from their internment camps like Tanah Merah, who had nationalist convictions and often Communist affiliations. The Australian government negotiated the prisoners' release soon after they arrived and over the remaining years of the war, these politicised Indonesians were able to circulate widely among Australians. The resulting friendships allowed Australians to gain an unprecedented familiarity with left wing Indonesian opinion.³⁴ This did not lead to immediate support from Australians. The Indonesian nationalists remaining in Indonesia had, in varying degrees, negotiated with the Japanese and had made clear their hopes for eventual national independence. Initially Indonesian seamen arriving in Australia in 1942 had wanted to mutiny against all continuing Dutch shipping movements.³⁵ The Australian left was at that time committed to support for the Allies, including the Dutch. This severely compromised the relationship between the Communist parties in each country and the nationalist decolonisation movements. As a consequence, there was no support from the CPA or the Australian left generally for the exiled Indonesian seamen in their 1942 plan to mutiny.

With the end of World War II, however, it became easier for the CPA and its sympathisers to consider acting against the Dutch when the Indonesians in Java declared unilateral independence on August 17 1945. Indonesian seamen, particularly in Brisbane, again called for support in declaring all Dutch shipping 'black' to deny any legitimacy or material support to the expected attempt to reimpose Dutch colonial control. Refusing to load ships in port was a common strategy used internationally among militant maritime workers. Port Kembla wharfies had refused to load the *Delfram* with pig iron bound for Japan was a well known example in Australia. In 1939 Indian seamen in port in England had struck successfully for higher wages early in the war by refusing to work on ships being refitted in dock for war duties.³⁶

Indonesian crew members walked off Dutch ships in Melbourne and Brisbane on 23 September 1945, after finding arms on a ship in the Brisbane port.³⁷ The following day, the WWF and the SUA announced their support and declared 'black' all Dutch ships in Brisbane and Melbourne and then later in Sydney and Fremantle.³⁸ The Australian unions received immediate support from the New Zealand Seamen's Union and Waterside Workers Unions, as well as from others overseas. Their goals, as recalled in 2007 by Communist Party of Australia (CPA) activist, Phyllis Johnson, who was a strong supporter of both Indonesian and Indian seamen, were to refuse any cooperation with the Dutch in a blanket ban on all shipping. One prominent example of the campaign was a demonstration on the Sydney docks against the British ship the *Stirling Castle* which was carrying Dutch troops to the East Indies. The troops threw rubbish down and hosed the demonstrators, who included many Sydney communists like Phyllis her husband Johnno Johnson and the young activist, Sylvia Mullins, whose photograph as she was drenched in the strong hose spray was widely publicised in what became a symbol of the Australian opposition to the Dutch presence.³⁹ The Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) carried the Australian side of this boycott. They were the strongest union operating on the wharves at this time and were in alliances with many of the smaller unions working on the docks and with the Seamen's Union members who controlled the tugs needed for disembarkation.⁴⁰ While the boycott was eventually broken by small, unaffiliated unions in Sydney, in the first months, it was the wharfies and their allies who were able to tie up the ports.

What they could not do was to stop the ships from sailing. The Australian accounts of the boycott, such as those in the histories of the Seamen's Union⁴¹ or the Wharfies⁴² and even the account of journalist and activist Rupert Lockwood,⁴³ all recount the campaign as if the black ban on loading from the docks was enough to stop the ships sailing. Yet Australian unions could not stop the ships

moving because the seamen on board the ships were not in those unions. The ships could only be stopped by the crews themselves and most of those seamen were Indians.

The Indian Story

The Indian story is very different. Firstly they had been largely invisible to Australians over the period of colonial structures, with only a little knowledge filtering in through unions like the SUA in the 1920s. Secondly, unlike the Indonesians, the Indians in Australia were not highly literate nor were they political activists in the sense that the Tanah Merah internees had been. They had not therefore been viewed with sympathy as newly exiled allies and so there had been no reason for the extensive wartime interchange which had grown around the exiled Indonesians. However, the ISUiA archive offers a new way to see into their experiences because it includes union papers, minutes, detailed membership records, speeches and letters from the Indian seamen themselves to the executive members remaining in Australia.⁴⁴ The archive confirms that Indian seamen had been passing through Australia for a very long time, crewing on all the colonial cargo and passenger ships which came into the Australian ports. These Indian seamen, or lascars, had worked on all colonial shipping since the late eighteenth century. Between ships, they had been living in long established 'coloured labour pools' set up in port cities, in places like The Rocks and Pyrmont in Sydney, where they were forced to live in overcrowded and insanitary conditions.

Sailors were not the only Indians to have an impact in Australia over the war years but it was these merchant seamen who were to intervene most directly into Australian political and social life.⁴⁵ Indian seamen in Sydney began talking at least as early as the mid-1930s with Clarrie Campbell, an Australian who served in the ANZAC Australian and New Zealand armed forces in Gallipoli alongside Indian troops from the north-western states and had begun to build friendships with them. He returned to Australia to take part in the anti-conscription campaigns.⁴⁶ After the war he set up some small companies in Sydney as a motor mechanic and eventually as a bitumen manufacturer. Campbell became an active member of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), managed Ben Chifley's first electoral campaign and sat on the Federal ALP Executive. He remained a confidant of Eddie Ward, the Minister for External Affairs in 1945. He was also a strong supporter and close friend of many CPA members, although he was never confirmed, even by Australian Security investigators, to have been a member.⁴⁷ Clarrie had maintained his contacts with Indian troops passing through Sydney and then extended this by meeting with Indian seamen, many of them Muslims coming from Calcutta Bombay and Goa. Together they established an Australia-India Association in the mid-1930s with a club operating in Sydney's Rocks area on the waterfront. This ran, rather uncomfortably for reasons of ideology and space, on the uppermost floor of the building owned by the Seamen's Mission a Christian-run institution to aid seamen 'between ships',⁴⁸

Sylvia Mullins and Phyllis Johnson both remember the social club well, having participated as volunteers during the later years of the war as members of the Communist Party.⁴⁹ They were each of a younger generation than Clarrie, both from economically struggling and highly politicised working-class families in smaller towns, Perth and Kandos near Lithgow respectively, before they came to Sydney. They were both fired by an intense commitment to social justice and excited by the international perspective which the Communist Party offered to them. The Indian Seamen's Club was one of the fulfilments of that promise Phyllis described how the Indians, as 'coloured seamen' were segregated on the top floor of the Seamen's Mission building while the 'white' sailors were allocated the more accessible and more pleasant lower floor. Yet both women remember how relaxed the club was, describing it as a 'tremendous experience' to meet seamen from different parts of India and of different cultures as they served tea and biscuits, watched the Hindustani films, took part in dancing, picnics and discussions. The club became the hub of the campaign to raise money to send aid to Bengal in the terrible famine of 1944 and provided a welcoming place for seamen to observe prayers. They shared the *Iftar* meal at the end of each fasting day during *Ramadan* and to celebrate its completion in *Eid ul-Fit*.⁵⁰ Just as importantly, the social club also provided opportunities for talking over union issues and politics in India. Phyllis and Sylvia each

remembered meeting Indonesians, Papuans and Chinese at the Indian social club, and Phyllis is adamant in all her initial statements that this was a struggle of the 'coloured seamen, the *coloured workers*' with all the national groups participating at all times. Yet Phyllis often restated her view that it was the Indians who were there in the greatest numbers and that, as the sailors, they carried the strike.⁵¹

The issues which the Indians were seeking to redress from early in the 1930s included the power held over seamen by the ships' officers and the shipping companies, as well as the specific wages and conditions under which Indians had little choice but to work.⁵² The war brought a new set of anomalies, as Australian Government intervention to ensure effective recruitment of merchant civilian shipping to contribute to the war effort led to substantial pay rises for all seamen. This had put a small amount of bargaining power into the hands of the Indian, Chinese and other seamen in their attempts to win improvements in wages and conditions.

The Indians, as discussed earlier, had substantial union experience and some had been in the thick of the struggles over unionisation in India, as one seaman explained to an Australian reporter:

This is not the first time I have been on strike. During the big strike in Calcutta when the Indian Seamen's Union was first formed I went days without food. They killed some of the strikers and ever since then I have been true to Union principles.⁵³

Many Indians were active members of the Indian seafarers' unions in Bombay or Calcutta at the time. Some of them wrote to the key activists, including Aftab Ali, in the Calcutta Union during the period of formation of the ISUiA and sought advice about the outcome of specific decisions which were being voted on by the Indian unions over these months.⁵⁴

So for the Indians it was logical to open discussions with the SUA, to whom they were introduced through Clarrie Campbell, to seek to be brought under the protection of the Australian union while they were in Australian waters.⁵⁵ They were rebuffed because they were 'foreign workers'. The Australians told them that current union policy was to offer support to independent unions of 'foreign' seamen but to exclude such 'foreigners' from the SUA because 'the union had enough to worry about as it was'.⁵⁶ Like the Chinese who approached the SUA in 1942 and the Indonesian exiles and internees at a later date during the war, the Indians were told that they should form their own union and the SUA would then support them. This was a difficult enough task for the Chinese and Indonesian seamen, but the Chinese had had a substantial resident population of Australian Chinese citizens from the early nineteenth century and the Indonesians as exiles were resident in Australia at least for the duration of the war, so both took this course. For the Indians it was far more difficult because they were not a resident population and, given the White Australia policy, they had no possibility of even a few of their members becoming residents. Instead they were cycling through Australian ports, resident only for the period when they were 'between ships'.⁵⁷ In describing the process when the Indians eventually did form a union, in the heat of the strike campaign early in November 1945, the NSW Trades and Labour Council criticised them for being reluctant to elect 'their own' as office bearers, seeking instead to have Australians fill the executive positions.⁵⁸ The SUA history patronisingly used this as evidence of the inexperience and timidity of workers it continued to regard as inexperienced and ignorant.⁵⁹ Yet with only Indian officer bearers, the Union would face the damaging effects of a constantly changing group of executive officers, which made the Indian attempt to have Australian office bearers seem a sound strategy. They declined to form a union in the early years of the war on these grounds and continued instead to organise informally and effectively through the networks of individual Australian unionists and activists being drawn into the Social Club.

It was these networks of informal organisation which allowed Indian seamen to be active in supporting the Indonesians within days of the call on 23 September 1945 to halt Dutch shipping. Indian leaders were photographed as they met at the NSW Trades Hall with Indonesian activists in the first week of October to pledge 'to *continue* their support'.⁶⁰ They agreed with the Indonesians that it was a contravention of the recently announced Atlantic Charter to reimpose a colonial

administration on an independent nation. They had a strategy for their action, although this was not recognised by Australian unions and commentators who accused the Indians of being reluctant to join the boycott.⁶¹ The Indian strategy was to stay on the ships but to refuse to work on goods designed to be sent to Indonesia, a strategy of non-cooperation. They would walk off the boats only when the ships appeared to be preparing to leave. This confused the Dutch and delaying their attempts to secure replacement crews, as well as deflecting the power of the shipping companies.

Under the Indian versions of the Asiatic Articles, the seamen by 1945 were all contracted to have a Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC). This ongoing record of their employment had originated in Bombay and in Calcutta as a fairer system to reduce the extortionate control which the shipping companies and their agents had had over the recruitment of seafarers.⁶²⁶³ However the Indian CDC, with its 'Quality of Work' note, gave the shipping company the opportunity to grade the individual seaman on his skills and behaviour while under contract to the company. This placed substantial power back in the hands of the companies, who could give an unsatisfactory discharge which would then have to be displayed to all future employers if the seaman wanted to authenticate their experience and years of service. One of the victories which was said to have been won by Indian seamen in 1926 was the Indian Government's acceptance of the ILO Maritime Session decision to delete the 'Quality of Work' section.⁶⁴ However, this section, or the 'Report of Character' with subsections for 'Ability' and for 'General Conduct', was still in use well into the 1950s.⁶⁵ The enormous power over Indian seamen which this placed in the hands of British and other international shipping companies was fully supported by the British government. The Australian seamen, who might have faced severe problems once they were under contract and at sea, were not directly subject to a CDC although there were some other forms of policing which the companies could invoke. In this strike however Australian seamen were not exposed at all because they did not have jobs on these ships. Land-based workers like the wharfies were even less at risk, having some minimal state protection and a strong union behind them by this stage. Only the Indians were faced with the extreme vulnerability of the CDCs yet their problem was not recognised by Australian unions at the time nor was it acknowledged anywhere in the Australian literature on the boycott.

This early photograph of the Indians meeting with the Indonesians is important in other ways as it suggests the relationships which were being created with the Indonesians by Indians who had begun reaching out to challenge the class and racial divisions fostered by the colonial shipping companies. This speech made by the Indians at a formal dinner they hosted for the Indonesians suggests the relationships being explored underneath the formal language:

In the past there have been small conflicts between Indian and Indonesian seamen ... We know now that in spite of the urgency of winning the war, certain shipping companies in their greed for profits, and even at the risk of losing the war, were prepared to use the people of one country against another. But the unity of our people, the people of two important countries, must ensure our ultimate emancipation.⁶⁶

The sense of common goals, between Indians, Indonesians and Australians, was made explicit again a few months later in a speech by Mohamed T. Hussain at a dinner in January 1946, hosted by the Indians, in which he thanked Australian unionists who had been close supporters:

for assisting us in playing some part in defeating the Dutch in the killing of Indonesians in their struggle for freedom. The winning of freedom in Indonesia will surely be followed by the freedom of India. For that reason we must do everything possible to see that the Dutch are driven out of Indonesia.⁶⁷

Finally the photograph of that early October 1945 meeting gives a visual clue to who these Indian seamen were. The two Indians are Ligorio de Costa, a Goan, and Abdul Rehman, an Indian from Poona City just outside Bombay who later became President of the ISUiA. The final participant is

Clarrie Campbell, standing on the right of the group. Rehman (whose name suggests his Muslim religion) and De Costa (who was, like most from Goa, of mixed Portugese and Indian descent and Catholic) were representative of two of the major groups among the Indian seamen in Australia, as became evident once membership details for the new union began to be gathered in November.

During those early October weeks Rehman and de Costa were joined by Dasrath Singh, whose name suggests an origin in north-western India as either a Sikh or a Hindu. We know little about Singh before his time in Sydney beyond his employment in the catering department of a KPM liner and that, as a seaman 'between ships', he had been visiting the Social Club for some time. 'Danny' Singh, as he was known to Australians, was an astute, charismatic activist and a gifted interpreter, who became Union secretary and was highly effective as an organiser in galvanising its members. Phyllis Johnson recalls him to have been a small but very active man who burst into 'the black section of the Seamen's Mission' around 10pm one evening early in October, just days after the Indonesians had called for a general boycott. Singh had three seamen from the *Japara* with him and he came with an message the Australians had not heard before, urging Clarrie Campbell, Barney Smith from the Seamen's Union and the Johnsons to help him to take urgent action. Phyllis remembers him to have said:

There's a ship at Ball's Head [one of the North Sydney docks]. There are Indian seamen on it and the Dutch are loading munitions! The Indian seamen are very concerned about it but they don't know what to do. We've got to get those men off!

Phyllis and Johnno went across the harbour with Danny to Ball's Head, where Phyllis stayed on the dock, waiting for hours, hunched on the pier:

Johnno went onto the ship with Danny and it took a long time ... because the Indians had to be sure ... that Johnno was fair dinkum. And John said, 'My wife is sitting on the wharf in the rain waiting for you to come off!' And it WAS raining I can tell you! Well, we got them all off ... they came up with their prayer mats and they had very very little, but they were the first seamen to walk off [in Sydney] and they were all Indian, all of them!⁶⁸

This was a grave step for the Indian sailors. Despite the one precedent of resisting transfer in Melbourne in 1923, they had usually taken such direct action only in the United Kingdom where there was a substantial resident South Asian population to support them.⁶⁹ In Australia the seamen were risking everything and needed clear assurances that they would be supported financially and politically.

This was the first time Australian activists became aware of an episode of loading guns and bullets onto commercial cargo vessels in Sydney ports. The earlier example had been in Brisbane late in September 1945,⁷⁰ but there had been no further proof that the Dutch had continued to load weapons. Campbell credited Singh with:

taking the first active steps to warn the Australian Trades Unions of the impending Dutch plans of running their boats from Australia to Java with munitions of war to be used against the Indonesian people in their fight for Independence.⁷¹

Lockwood recounted how the Indian warning caught the Australians off guard: they had not expected the Indians to take part in the strike and they had not, realised that weapons had already been loaded in Sydney by Australian unionists and Dutch scab labour.⁷²

The Dutch merchant ships lying loaded, repaired, fuelled and ready to depart by this time included not only the *Japara* but also the *General Verspijck*, the *El Liberatador*, the *Patras*, and the *Schwartenhondt*. The Indians on a number of these ships were now working under duress as Dutch troops had been boarded to take up the work left undone by striking waterside workers and also to ensure the crews sailed. On both the *General Vespijck* and the *Patras*, those Indians who remained

on board were known to be working at gunpoint as they reluctantly went about daily maintenance as the Dutch troops continued the strikebreaking work of preparing the ships for departure.

Since the Indonesian declaration of Independence, the Australian Left and the Indonesians had been campaigning strongly for repatriation of all striking Indonesian seamen. From the group of previously interned Indonesians, many were also seeking repatriation to independent Republican-held areas. Most left Sydney on the *Esperance Bay* on 13 October, eventually reaching Indonesia safely to allow them to rejoin the nationalist struggle for Independence. Virtually all of the striking seamen and many Indonesian political activists left Australia at this time.⁷³ The only substantial body of people remaining to crew the Dutch ships were therefore the Indians.⁷⁴

As the Dutch became increasingly concerned about manning their merchant fleet, they looked for replacement crews from two sources, both related to the British. They firstly approached other shipping lines in Australia who 'owned' 'labour pools'. The *Tribune* reported⁷⁵ that the Dutch had turned to the Australian shipping company Burns Philp, a cargo line operating through Melanesia and the Pacific as well as the Indian Ocean and exempt in that period from the Australian prohibition against 'Asiatic crews'. The Dutch had 'borrowed' the Indians 'kept' by Burns Philp in their squalid 'labour pool', forcing them at gunpoint to work as crewmen on the *Japara*, which the original Indian crew had left on strike. Both the transfer to another shipping company, the transfer to vessels whose destination was NOT an Indian one and the transfer to another port were all actions contradictory to the Indian articles of agreement under which Indians were contracted and were precisely the circumstances to which Indians had developed strategic opposition in the past in the United Kingdom and in Australia.⁷⁶ The second source of labour was British India itself, and the Dutch received the active cooperation of the British colonial administration to recruit seamen in Bombay. The timing of the arrival and forced mobilisation of these replacement Indian crews was not well recorded in the early boycott, but it is clear that they had not been informed about the political role they would be fulfilling by sailing on the Dutch ships.

On 20 October, the Dutch attempted to sail the *Patras* out of Sydney, with Dutch guns trained on the Indian engine crew, Dutch strike breakers and some of these newly arrived Indian seamen to replace the striking Indian deckhands. An extraordinary chase down Sydney Harbour ensued in which a small launch driven at high speed by Australian unionists like Barney Smith (Seamen's Union) with Dasrath Singh and other Indian seamen pursued the large Dutch cargo ship. From the launch, Singh addressed the crew by megaphone in Urdu or Hindi. He explained the Dutch attempt to re-arm their colonial forces in Indonesia and argued the case for joining the strike to the receptive crew, but the presence of Dutch troops made it impossible to intervene further and the ship steamed out of the heads. Yet within hours it had limped humiliated back into port. As the Indian crew poured over the sides into waiting launches, they described how they had taken the dramatic, confrontational decision to refuse to stoke the engines. The Indians had agreed to go back to work only if the ship returned to port, leaving the Dutch little option but to comply.⁷⁷ The case of the *General Vespjck* was similar, where armed Dutch guards formed an intimidating presence when Singh and others stood off the boat's stern and addressed the crew. Here too the Indian crew members decided on direct confrontation, letting the steam down in the ship's engines, and then leaving the ship spectacularly *en masse* in lifeboats lowered over the side. They argued they would not carry armaments 'for use against their "Indonesian brothers"'.⁷⁸

Only the Indian activists could have achieved these results. There appear to have been no language skills at all amongst the Australian organisers. Neither Clarrie Campbell nor Australian maritime unionists spoke Hindi, Urdu, Goanese or Bengali, the major languages of the Indian seamen. The only people who could do this negotiating were the Indian organisers.

There is a strange, inverted glimpse at this process when we look at the film *Indonesia Calling*. The film was shot by re-enacting events which had taken place just a few weeks before. It used many of the longest resident members of the ISUiA, including Abdul Rehman, Dasrath Singh and Clarrie Campbell, along with other Indians who can be seen wearing their ISUiA badges prominently. Each of them can be identified from press photographs of the time and have more recently been identified by participants in events.⁷⁹ Yet the parts they were called on to act out

(reinforced by the tight editing and voice over) had them appearing to be newly arrived and naïve workers who had had to be introduced to the issues for the first time by the Australians and Indonesians. This disjunction between the film's narrative of marginal, naïve Indians compared with the visual evidence of high levels of Indian involvement and planning was just one of the contemporary causes of widespread confusion about the Indian role in the boycott.

The Indian organisers from the ISUiA began visiting the various miserable 'labour pools' around the port cities, talking to the Indians again in their own languages, mobilising them to resist the pressures from their contract employers and from Dutch troops. In the process they drew more and more Indian seamen into the strike.⁸⁰ Dutch alarm increased at the impact the Indian campaign was having and although they had no formal jurisdiction in Australia, the presence of Dutch security officers became more obvious, seemingly aimed at intimidating the Indian organisers. Australian supporters were concerned enough to organise protection for the Indians and on one occasion Sylvia Mullins called on her brother Jack to look after Dasrath Singh. On leave from the air force, Jack took on the job for four days, calling on another airforce mate, Harry, to help. Jack described the scene as he and Harry moved Dasrath Singh from meeting to meeting, with the Dutch following them threateningly in a car crawling along the curb.⁸¹

And we were shadowed by a couple of big heavy Dutch blokes in a car. I got on the outside, then there was Danny and then there was Harry on the inside because he was the short bloke – although he's a good wrestler. And at one stage they pulled up along side us, and one started to get out and said, 'Singh come here'. And I turned around and I said, 'Piss off. He's not going anywhere with you.' So they decided they'd better not tackle us. We were in air force uniforms. So away they went.'

The intimidation continued through the four days Jack was on duty,

As it became harder to break the bans imposed by Indian seamen on ships leaving the Sydney ports, the Dutch began to take the newly imported replacement Indian crews by train from their arrival point in Sydney through to other ports. In November, 60 Indian seamen newly landed from the British ship *Chaibassa* were hustled through Sydney's Central Railway Station to load them onto a train for Brisbane where Dutch ships had been left stranded by striking Indian crews. Dasrath Singh was there again, supported by a large group of Pathan seamen, all of whom were speaking to the replacement crewmen in Urdu or Hindi to explain the black bans which they had unknowingly been recruited to break. Dutch guards recognised Singh and called the police who intervened violently and 'punched and manhandled the striking Indian seamen in a forcible attempt to prevent them speaking'. Singh was hurled over luggage barrows and knocked to the ground. To do this under the clock in the busy main thoroughfare at Central Station opened both the Dutch and the Australian police up to horrified gaze of the public, many of whom expressed their distaste for both the violence of the police and the arrogance of the armed Dutch guards acting to coerce British citizens.⁸²

On October 22, most of the Indian crews already on the Dutch ships walked off and by 30 October they had left the last ship, the *Pahud*.⁸³ From then on, only newly recruited replacement crews were put on to the idle ships, but most of them were contacted by the Indian organisers and, ship by ship, they too joined the strike. Campbell estimated that there were over 200 Indians who had walked off the boats over October and November while over 1,000 remained on Dutch ships but refusing to cooperate on NEI related work.⁸⁴ The only Indian crews who sailed were those being coerced by Dutch troops and even those sailing at gunpoint were prepared to mutiny where they knew they had support on shore.

By now, a substantial body of Indian strikers were in open dispute with the contracting shipping companies and so were in urgent need of accommodation and board. The Indian seamen began to contribute and, as Campbell recounted in 1946, they 'subscribed many times more in cash than did the whole of the Australian Trades Unions combined' and 'sacrificed £20,000 in lost pay' over the period of the strike. The NSW Trades and Labor Council and the Australian maritime

unions contributed as well, but it was the Indian seamen who then initiated a campaign to force KPM, as the contractor, to fund both board and lodging and repatriation costs. Despite protests from the Dutch, on 23 October the Indians moved into the now-empty Lido, a boarding house in North Sydney allocated to the Dutch administration by the Australian government during the war to house NEI exiles and previously used, against protests from KPM, to house the striking Indonesian seamen in preparation for their earlier repatriation. Phyllis Johnson and other volunteers from the Social Club continued to help manage the accommodation: 'Johnno was the providore', Phyllis remembers, 'and I was the publicity officer!!' Phyllis with Geoff Wills, another activist, would go from worksite to worksite with a megaphone, speaking about the Indonesian cause and explaining the stand of the Indian seamen.⁸⁵

The next Indian move was to press further still their campaign for KPM to accept their funding responsibilities as contractors. The Indians argued they were prepared to fulfil their side of the contract by doing any other appropriate work but they would not crew the ships being used to break the Atlantic Charter by carrying arms and direct material aid to re-establish the NEI. They launched a series of petitions, appeals and eventually held two major demonstrations against the KPM at their Sydney office on 12 and 18 December, at the same time petitioning and sending formal deputations to the Indian High Commissioner in Australia (in Sydney and later in Canberra) to support the repatriation effort.

Their second demonstration on Tuesday 18 December 1945 was an unprecedented event. The Indians decided to march from the Lido across the Harbour Bridge to the KPM offices in the centre of Sydney's business district. They were accompanied by a handful of Australian trade unionists, including stalwarts like Barney Smith and, as there were no Indonesian seamen remaining in Australia, they were joined by a small number of the Indonesian activists from the Indonesian sub-committee of the Trades and Labour Council. Supportive Australian unionists who were soldiers and airmen accompanied the Indians in uniform. Their march was extraordinary. It was, as Rupert Lockwood writes, 'the first great demonstration of Asians ever seen in the streets of Sydney'. This was so powerful an event in the minds of the trade union participants that it was re-enacted for *Indonesia Calling*.⁸⁶ After occupying the KPM offices for the second time, and delivering an ultimatum, they moved to occupy the offices of the Indian High Commissioner in Margaret Street, again accompanied by unionist supporters, including S. Moran from the Sydney WWF. He estimated there were many hundreds of Indians involved in the demonstration. Moran described this peaceful occupation as involving precisely the non-cooperation tactics made famous in Gandhian campaigns in South Africa and India. The first rows of Indian seamen sat or squatted on the floor, only to be carried off by the NSW police who then returned to find that the demonstrators' places had been promptly taken by another set of Indians. The process was repeated till the High Commissioner accepted the ten demands the Indian unionists placed before him.⁸⁷

Ultimately the Indians won a capitulation by KPM on the funding issues⁸⁸ although the implementation of repatriation, the compensation for KPM failure to fulfil contracts and the discharge arrangements for Indian seamen proved to be deeply discriminatory and retaliatory.⁸⁹ The Indian High Commissioner proved that his loyalties lay at least in part with the British, agreeing to block the recruitment of further replacement crews in Bombay but failed to stop reprisals being against Indian seamen in the repatriation and discharge process by the Dutch shipping company.⁹⁰

The Indians did finally form a union in November 1945 and their documentation allows us a rich insight into history of the Indians in Australia. Analysis is continuing in collaboration with Indian historians to learn more about the 922 men who joined the union over its brief life, from 1945 to 1949. Already it is clear that the membership lists show a significant participation of Muslims (from the areas which were to become Pakistan and Bangladesh) as well as the presence of Goans and some Sikhs and Hindus. The presence of Muslims was important in terms of the political motivations for the Indian involvement in the boycott. Shared Islamic faith was a major motivating factor in the solidarity between the Indian seamen and the Indonesians. The Indians pointed out its importance on a number of occasions and in an interview on 30 October 1945, one Indian spokesman saying:

The Indonesians are 98% Mohammedan and the Indian seamen in Sydney are 98% Mohammedans. Thus the shipping companies are trying to force us to take part in a war on our brother Mohammedans. This is against our conscience, as well as being against the law.⁹¹

Yet despite the significant role of the Indians in the success of the boycott, Australian unionists continued to ignore their presence and their initiative. The most striking example was the failure by the WWF to include the Indian Seamen's Union in Australia in its high profile *Hands Off Indonesia* rally in Sydney in April 1946. The Australian union simply ignored the Indian Seamen's Union, which was not invited to speak or attend the rally despite their major role in the strike's implementation and success.

Campbell wrote an icy letter of protest to the general secretaries of the WWF, NSW and Federal, the Federal Ironworkers Union, the Federal Seamen's Union, the ALP (Stan Sharkey) and the Indonesian Seamen's Union,⁹² in which he pointed out:

The withholding of Dutch ships could not have been successful without the cooperation of the Indian seamen. Every Dutch ship left by Indians had been previously repaired, stored, cargoes, coaled, tugged and piloted by Australian Unions, and were only held up at the last moment by the Indians spontaneously leaving these ships.

Throughout the Campaign, the Indian seamen have played an outstanding part. They led the demonstrations in each case against the Dutch shipping company, they subscribed many times more cash than did the whole of the Australian Trades Unions combined. They sacrificed 20,000 in wages and willingly saw their families starve in India rather than assist the Dutch to suppress the Indonesian Republic ...

The Indian seamen do not regret the sacrifices they have made in the common struggle, on the contrary, they take pride in being in the vanguard of such an important event in world's history, but they do strongly object to their conscious or unconscious exclusion at such demonstrations as this Town Hall rally when an opportunity could have been afforded them to meet progressive Australians.

Trusting that in future more consideration will be given to those who have and who are destined to play such an important part in the freedom of the Colonial peoples ...

The Indonesian Seamen's Union scrambled to apologise to the ISUiA over the blunder, its President M.H.L. Mailangkay, explaining that the WWF had organised the rally without consulting *them* either. The Indonesians, Mailangkay went on to assure the Indians, were making urgent representations to correct the omission of people they regarded as playing such 'a heroic part in our common struggle'.⁹³

The SUA took Campbell's letter deeply to heart. Its newsletter, the *Seamen's Journal* published large sections of Campbell's letter although it did not explain the context in which the letter had been written.⁹⁴ It is not yet clear whether Campbell's angry representations on behalf of the Indians were eventually enough to have them invited to be at this rally.

Yet it was not only unions and working people who harboured a deep-seated reluctance to recognise the role of the Indians in the boycott and the broader politics of decolonisation. Over this period the ALP government was increasingly concerned at the tensions between the Communist party and the ALP and there were deep suspicions held by all the federal ministers over the directions of future relations. It was at this time that the ALP brought in its internal rules disallowing CPA members or affiliates from taking active roles in party processes. The British government and military were exerting increasing pressure to break the bans on the movement of

Dutch shipping as the British were in charge of managing the disarmament of the Japanese in the South East Asian region, and needed as many ships as possible both to repatriate Allied Prisoners of War and to re-establish Dutch control in a stable administration in Indonesia. British pressure was applied to the Federal Government and Attorney General Bert Evatt was particularly sympathetic. He had favoured sending Australian troops into Indonesia to support the Dutch re-entry and was active in challenging left-wing union influence over foreign affairs. The Government influenced some unions to swing debate in the Australian Council of Trades Unions (ACTU) and the State Trades and Labour Councils (TLC) to have the bans lifted. There were a series of meetings and increasingly tense debates with the upshot that late in January 1946 the NSW TLC and the ACTU had voted to suspend the bans with a trial 'relief' ship. Indian strikers and their union were not consulted, or informed of the decision, learning about it from a news report. The Indian Seamen's Union wrote a bitter letter of protest but they were confronting a deep seated prejudice which Bert Evatt himself revealed in a back-room meeting. Clarrie Campbell wrote about it in a letter to Phyllis and Johnno Johnson:

I elbowed myself into the ACTU as a co-opted member, and each time, they were ready to vote for a trial ship I threw a spanner in the works that has on each occasion brought about the rejection of a ship.

On one occasion, a committee was appointed to wait on Evatt and I was included: Evatt without any provocation, said 'All Indians were scabs!' Guess what I said? Yesterday, the ACTU met again but I was not invited, so I don't know what happened.⁹⁵

Reflections on a Strike

The boycott was effectively broken in July 1946, when the uneasy leadership of the NSW Trades and Labour Council were able to prevail on a small union which bunkered ships in Sydney Harbour with coal and was not yet affiliated to the WWF. With Dutch troops and volunteers stoking the engines, KPM was able to slip its remaining ships out of the harbour to rendezvous points off shore where the Netherlands had organised larger ships to resupply and recrew the boats.⁹⁶ While further demonstrations and token black bans protesting Dutch 'Police Actions' in Indonesia continued to be imposed until Independence in 1949, the most urgent pressure was lifted from the Indian seamen once the last Dutch ships left Australian waters.

By mid-1946, the Indian Seamen's Union in Australia was assessing the impacts on its members. The outcomes were significantly different and far more severe for the Indians than they were for the Australian trade unionists, although the fallout from the boycott was momentous enough within Australia. Most of the Indian activists were deported when the main body of striking Indian crewmen were repatriated in a series of ships leaving from January to March 1946. When they reached their homes in India, they began collecting their Continuous Discharge Certificates, only to find that KPM and the other shipping companies had marked their 'Report of Character' section with DESERTER, a label which ensured they were unlikely to work again in any comparable position.⁹⁷ The story of the struggle to challenge these bad discharges and to gain recognition for the strikers among the emerging leaders of independent India will be the subject of another strand of this project. Yet the grave difficulties faced by the Indians were of little interest among unions in Australia. Although the ISUiA tried to organise support from the Australian government and the union movement, there was little effective action.

The Indian role in the boycotts was lost to view for three reasons. It was perhaps in small part because of the confusion arising from Australian ignorance of the non-European countries of the Indian Ocean and Asia, an ignorance which was exacerbated by the media of the day which frequently confused one Asian seaman with another and homogenised all the strikers as 'Indonesian'. Largely however, the story was lost because of the perpetuation of differential racial stereotyping not only within the general white Australian population but within the culture of the

left and labour movements. The unionists, politicians and activists involved in the boycotts simply did not expect the Indians to be politicised, to be unionised, to be acting in strategic support of their sense of cultural and religious affiliation or even to be articulate about their goals. They were not expecting to learn from or share ideas and strategies with the Indians. There were some outstanding exceptions among the Australians, but most failed to seize the opportunity to engage with the Indians as a complex political community, grappling with many of the same issues faced by the Australian workers themselves. The Australian assumption that Indians were only reacting to urging from Australian trade unionists is evident throughout the trade union histories and was everywhere demonstrated in the contemporary press and union statements. Yet the Indian seamen took opportunities to explain their motives, their strategies and their goals. While differing languages clearly posed a significant barrier, there were strong and clear statements in English which should have elicited recognition.

Finally, the events of history caught up with the individuals involved, removing from the scene of active politics those who might have told the story differently. Many of the Indians were excluded from the international shipping trade because of their bad discharges, thus severely restricting their future employment but also their union activity. Ironically, their greatest challenge turned out to be the achievement of the very goal, Independence, for which so many of them had struggled. When Independence did finally come in 1947, it was accompanied by Partition, which by dividing the areas of high seamen's recruitment in West and East Pakistan from India, also severed the links between many of seafarers who had joined the ISUiA in Australia in 1945. Most were Muslims but their homes lay on different sides of what became the borders of India and Pakistan. Of the Indonesians who had been in Australia, while many had returned to become part of the left wing of the nationalist struggle for independence inside Indonesia, some of those who had been closest to the Australians were lost in the conflicts within the movement which led to the execution of many members of the left at Madiun in 1948 and then later in 1965. The Australians who had supported the Indians were few in number and were soon scattered. Barney Smith was killed in a car accident and Clarrie Campbell was drawn increasingly into the attempts to set up trade links with Republican Indonesia, moving to Singapore to further this goal by 1948. The pressures of the Cold War generated isolation and paranoia, separating old comrades even more effectively than distance and borders might have done. By 1950, the divisive effects of the Cold War had overturned the government in Australia, split the Labor Party and driven the left into defensive isolation.

The boycott had indeed been a high point in Australian unionism. It was extremely important in offering an example of the power of solidarity and of the common interests between decolonising people across the region. It allowed an unprecedented sense of collaboration across racial and cultural lines. So it is rightly celebrated, but it is more complex than the Australian union histories would have us believe. This strike tells us not only about some Australians opening their doors and their political affinities to the decolonisation movement. It is also an example of how many Australians found it very difficult to listen to the working people of neighbouring countries when they were arguing, not only for industrial justice but for independence and political freedom.

The opportunity had been offered for so much more, something perhaps much closer to the 'community of labour' which might have been the promise of internationalism.⁹⁸ Clarrie Campbell gave a glimpse of the possibilities when he pleaded with the Indian High Commissioner in Australia in July 1946 to help expunge the 'Deserter' stamp from the discharge papers of the strikers.⁹⁹ Campbell revealed his own debt of gratitude, his shared commitment to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and his warm admiration for the Indians with whom he'd worked when he wrote them a tribute which should echo down the years:

they put into practice a desire that is burning within the hearts of hundreds of millions of their countrymen: Freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of expression, freedom of religion and freedom to determine their own way of life.

Heather Goodall is Professor of History at the University of Technology, Sydney. She has researched and published extensively on Indigenous history in Australia and teaches on comparative colonial and decolonisation history. Her current research, with Devleena Ghosh, Michael Pearson and Stephen Muecke, is into the Intercolonial links between India and Australia.

Heather.Goodall@uts.edu.au

Endnotes

- * Many people have generously offered comments and suggestions on this project and on the draft paper to bring it to this stage although the responsibility for its conclusions is my own. My thanks go to Anjali Roy, Haripriya Rangan, Paul Torzillo, Devleena Ghosh, Drew Cottle, Rowan Cahill, Jim Masselos, Jan Lingard, Samia Hossain, Suchetana Chattopadhyay, Duncan Waterson, Michael Pearson, G. Balachandran, Robert Haworth, Abdulgani Serang and Mahesh Rangarajan. Researchers Titas Chakraborty and Prakriti Mitra in Kolkata and Lindi Todd in Sydney have contributed important analytical insights as well as committed research assistance while Allison Cadzow has given valuable editorial advice. The staff of the Noel Butlin Archive Centre have been generous with their careful, patient and professional assistance. The two anonymous referees for this journal have offered both important insights and suggestions of fruitful resources. Above all, I am indebted to Jack and Pat Mullins, to Sylvia Mullins Cross and to Phyllis Johnson, who took part in these events and wanted the story told. An earlier version of this article was delivered at the Trans Tasman Labour History Conference, *Comparative or Transnational?* held at Auckland University of Technology, 1 February 2007. The reworked article has been peer-reviewed for *Labour History* by two anonymous referees.
1. Margo Beasley, *Wharfies: A History of the Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia*, Halstead Press, Sydney, 1996; Drew Cottle and Angela Keys, 'From Colonial Film Commissioner to Political Pariah: Joris Ivens and the Making of *Indonesia Calling*' (paper presented at the Film and History Conference, Melbourne, 2006; Brian Fitzpatrick and Rowan J. Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia, 1872-1972: A History*, Seamen's Union of Australia, Sydney, 1981; Rupert Lockwood, *Black Armada: Australia and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence 1942-49*, Halstead Press, Sydney, 1982.
 2. For a recent discussion of the value of comparative analysis in relation to Indian labour history, see Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, 'Introduction to Coolies, Capital and Colonialism: Studies in Indian Labour History', *International Review of Social History*, vol. 51, 2006, pp. 7-19. THIS DOES NEED TO BE IN, ADD IN BEFORE YEAR DATE HERE TOO BIBLIOGRPAHY mentions Supplement and 13 December???
 3. This is an early report of work the author is doing in relation to inter-colonial relations across the Indian Ocean with Devleena Ghosh, Michael Pearson and Stephen Muecke. The Indian Seamen's Union in Australia (ISUIA) archives are housed at the Noel Butlin Archives of Business and Labour, Australian National University (hereafter NBAC) Deposit Number E177, 1945-1949. New work emerging in this inquiry will demonstrate the gendered nature of race and decolonisation politics in Australia in the immediate post-war period. Collaborations have been initiated with Indian social and labour historians like Professor G. Balachandran, International History and Politics, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva and Dr Suchetana Chattopadhyay, Department of History, Jadavpur University. The discussion of Indonesians in Australia and the broader context of the Indonesian revolution draws on the work of Jan Lingard on the Indonesians exiled in Australia during World War II, ie, in her forthcoming book, *Refugees and Rebels: Indonesian Exiles in Wartime Australia*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2008, and in her articles: Jan Lingard, 'The Beginnings of a Relationship: Indonesians in Australia 1942-47', *Meanjin*, vol. 57 no.3, 1998, pp. 541-552; Jan Lingard, 'The First Asian Boat People', *Inside Indonesia*, Oct.-Dec. 2001, pp. 21-22. I am drawing also on the research of this period in Indonesia by Benedict Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944-1946*, Equinox Publishing, Jakarta & Singapore, 1972, reprinted 2006; Joan Hardjono and Charles Warner, *In Love with a Nation: Molly Bondan and Indonesia*, Charles Warner, Picton, 1995. Further research will build on the foundational research of Anderson and other key early researchers such as George McT. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution* Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1952, and Margaret George, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution*, Melbourne University Press, in association with the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Carlton, Vic, 1980.
 4. Julia Martínez, "'Coolies' to Comrades: Internationalism between Australian and Asian Seamen' in Raymond Markey (ed.), *Labour and Community: Historical Essays*, University of Wollongong Press Wollongong, 2001, pp. 295-312.
 5. Gopalan Balachandran, 'Circulation through Seafaring: Indian Seamen 1890-1945', in Claude Markovits, Jacques Pouchepadass, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (eds), *Society and Circulation: Mobile Peoples and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia, 1750-1950*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2003; Gopalan Balachandran, 'Searching for the Sardar: The State, Pre-capitalist Institutions and Human Agency in the Maritime Labour Market, Calcutta, 1880-1935', in Burton Stein and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (eds), *Institutions and Economic Change in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1996; Michael Quinlan, 'Industrial Relations before Unions: New South Wales Seamen 1810-1852', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 38, no. 2, 1996, p. 264-93.

6. Gopalan Balachandran, 'Cultures of Protest in Transnational Contexts: Indian Seamen Abroad, 1885-1945', in Devleena Ghosh and Stephen Muecke (eds), *Culture and Commerce in the Indian Ocean* issue of *Transforming Cultures eJournal*, 2008 (forthcoming); Quinlan, 'Industrial Relations before Unions'.
7. Frank Broeze, 'The Muscles of Empire: Indian Seamen and the Raj, 1919-1939', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 1, 1981, pp. 43-67.
8. *Ibid*; Frank Broeze, *Island Nation: A History of Australians and the Sea*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998.
9. Laura Tabili, *'We Ask for British Justice': Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain*, Cornell, New York, 1994, pp. 185-186
10. Broeze, 'The Muscles of Empire', p. 54.
11. Broeze, *Island Nation*.
12. 'Seamen's Union Crews', demanded what was in fact a new imposition of bans on 'Asiatic crews' now wartime conditions were 'returning to normal', *Seamen's Journal*, vol. IV no. 4, Oct. 1946, p. 1.
13. See Beasley, *Wharfies*; Fitzpatrick and Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia*.
14. This discussion draws particularly on the analysis of indenture by David Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, NY, Melbourne, 1995. Julia Martínez has contributed to work in the pearling industry, in her 'The End of Indenture? Asian Workers in the Australian Pearling Industry 1901-1972' in *International Labor and Working Class History*, vol. 67, Spring, 2005, pp. 125-147; and my work in relation to Aboriginal children in NSW has discussed the parallel with colonial indenture, see Heather Goodall, "'Saving the Children" Gender and the Colonization of Aboriginal Children in NSW, 1788-1990', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, vol. 2, no. 44, 1995, pp. 6-9.
15. Heather Goodall, Devleena Ghosh, and Lindi R. Todd, 'Jumping Ship: Skirting Empire. Indians, Aborigines and Australians Across the Indian Ocean', *Landscapes of Meaning*, special issue of *Transforming Cultures eJournal* 3, 2008 (forthcoming). Graham Shirley of the National Film and Sound Archive has directed my future research to a number of films of the period, such as *Cooee Singapore* and *This Changing World* which reinforce this impression of racial hierarchy on steam liners and demonstrate the general invisibility of the large numbers of Indian crews 'below decks'. Personal communication, November 2007.
16. Jim Masselos, 'Changing Definitions of Bombay: City State to Capital City', p 293 in Indu Banga (ed.), *Ports and Their Hinterlands, 1700-1950*, Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1992, pp. 273-316 p 293 – this page number followed City originally – it is the specific page ref within the article
17. These figures drawn from Balachandran, 'Circulation through Seafaring: Indian Seamen 1890-1945', p. 98-99; Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700-1947*, Pluto Press, London, 1986, pp. 34-54; J.P. Jones, 'Lascars in the Port of London', *P.L.A. Monthly*, February 1931; Report P&O Board of Directors, 2 June 1900: Report on employment of Indian Seamen, both archived at <http://www.lascars.co.uk>,
18. Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 90 on the 1915 attempt to assist Cinghalese seamen in Darwin for a branch of the One Big Union, the united single union for all workers which was the goal of the IWW.
19. Martínez, "'Coolies" to Comrades'.
20. Broeze, 'The Muscles of Empire'; Suchetana Chattopadhyay has traced the active role of Muslims in Calcutta in the Socialist and Communist Movements in 'War, Migration and Alienation in Colonial Calcutta: The Remaking of Muzaffar Ahmad', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 64, 2007, pp. 212-239.
21. Balachandran, 'Cultures of Protest in Transnational Contexts'.
22. Tabili, *'We Ask for British Justice'*.
23. Martínez, "'Coolies" to Comrades', pp 306-7. The Indians' views are recorded in their letter to the *Seamen's Journal*, published in December 1923, p. 15.
24. Deitrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere: Religious Groups in India, 1900-1947*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006; Eric Germain, 'Southern Hemisphere Diasporic Communities in the Building of an International Muslim Public Opinion at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2007, pp. 126-138.
25. Germain, 'Southern Hemisphere Diasporic Communities'.
26. Michael B. Miller, 'Pilgrims' Progress: The Business of the Haj', *Past and Present*, no. 191, 2006.
27. Broeze, 'The Muscles of Empire', p. 54.
28. Hardjono and Warner, *In Love with a Nation*, pp. 24-27.
29. Janet Ewald, 'Crossers of the Sea: Slaves, Freedmen, and Other Migrants in the Northwestern Indian Ocean, c. 1750-1914,' *American Historical Review*, no. 105, 2000, pp. 1-42.
30. Heather Goodall's interview with Phyllis Johnson (born 1917) conducted at Padstow, NSW, 10 May 2007 and with Sylvia Mullins (born 1925) conducted at Normanhurst, NSW, 13 March 2007.
31. Fitzpatrick and Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia, 1872-1972*, p. 182. Note that this history was written in 1981, considerably before Julia Martínez published her study of the SUA journal which demonstrated at least a passing awareness of the rise of Indian unionism in the 1920s. (2001)
32. Fitzpatrick and Cahill, *Seamen's Union of Australi*, p. 174.

33 . Cottle and Keys, 'From Colonial Film Commissioner to Political Pariah', Ian Mundell, *Joris Ivens, Biography, 2005*, Senses of Cinema Online, Database of Great Directors www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/05/ivens.html, last accessed 24 Feb 2008.

34 . Hardjono and Warner, *In Love with a Nation*, Pp. 18-41.

35 . Lockwood, *Black Armada*, pp. 60-64; Fitzpatrick and Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia*, p. 169.

36 . Balachandran, 'Cultures of Protest in Transnational Contexts', Broeze, *Island Nation*, Fitzpatrick and Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia*, Tabili, 'We Ask for British Justice', pp. 161-177.

37 . Hardjono and Warner, *In Love with a Nation*, p. 39.

38 . Lockwood, *Black Armada*.

39 . Interview with Phyllis Johnson, 10 May 2007; interview with Sylvia Mullins, 13 March 2007; *Sydney Sun*, 7 November 1945.

40 . Lockwood, *Black Armada*, pp 209-214.

41 . Fitzpatrick and Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia*, pp 168-178.

42 . Beasley, *Wharfies*. Pp 127-129

43 . Lockwood, *Black Armada*, pp 149-159.

44 . NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E177, 1945-1949. In addition, the papers of Clarrie Campbell are also held in the Noel Butlin Archives Centre as C.H. Campbell papers: Archive Deposit number: P81, 1944-1947.

45 . NBAC, C.H. Campbell papers, P81, contain substantial correspondence with these Indian POWs in the process of assisting them to contact their families and find their way home. Phyllis Johnson recalls visiting a troop ship carrying returning Indian POWs when it called into Sydney in later 1945. Furthermore, active Indian troops were deployed by the British in major actions as they led the South East Asian command to reestablish colonial 'stability' after Japanese surrender. Indian troops were the major armed force in the British assault on Surabaya, in eastern Java in October and November 1945, when between 10,000 and 15,000 Indonesian republicans and civilians died resisting the Dutch reentry. B. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*; A.J.F. Doulton, *The Fighting Cock: Being the History of the 23rd Indian Division, 1942-1947*, The Naval and Military Press, Ltd, Uckfield, UK, 1950; Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper: *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire*, Allen Lane/Penguin, London, 2007.

46 . Biographical sketch from Archivist's acquisition notes and from internal evidence, eg Campbell to Chifley, 6 June 1946, P 81/31, C.H. Campbell Papers. Much of what we know about Clarrie has emerged from the detailed work on his early life by Duncan Waterson and from Drew Cottle's research on Clarrie's role in Asian Airlines. Rupert Lockwood thought Clarrie had disappeared somewhere in Malaysia during the Emergency but he was living in Singapore when Phyllis Johnson visited him in 1971 as she passed through with a group of women forming a CPA delegation to the Soviet Union. Their dinner at the Singapore Motor Club was reported with a photograph of the meal in the *Singapore Herald*, 11 May 1971.

47 . Campbell to Chifley, 6 June 1946, P 81/31, Campbell to Sutan Sjahrir, Premier Indonesian Republic, 15 October 1946, P81/1 – all in C.H. Campbell Papers; ASIO, Campbell Archive, National Archives of Australia, Series A6119/79, vols 1 and 5; *Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 1947; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 September 1948.

48 . Some of whom were later called 'the Protestant Parasites' by a Goan Indian (presumably Catholic) in a letter to Campbell. NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E 177/4, Joseph Noronha to CHC, 28 October 1945.

49 . Interviews with Sylvia Mullins 13. March 2007 and Phyllis Johnson 10 May 2007; interview conducted by Jan Lingard with Phyllis Johnson, recorded in mid-1990s.

50 . ISUiA Archives, E 177/5, flyers for Bengal Famine Relief Fund, 18 July 1944; Ramadan is determined by the lunar calendar and fell in October, with Eid taking place in November in each of the years of 1945 and 1946. See *Tribune*, 23 November 1945 and ISUiA Archives for 1946.

51 . Interview Phyllis Johnson, 10 May 2007.

52 . NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E177, ISUiA correspondence generally.

53 . *Tribune*, 26 October 1945.

54 . NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E 177/4, 16th September 1945. Abdul Kadar, union member of ISUiA, wrote to Faiz Ahmed, acting General Secretary of the Indian Seamen's Union, based at 28 Circular Garden Reach Rd, Kidderpore, Calcutta; ISUiA membership for member no. 27, Karimudin, who gives Aftab Ali, Union President, Circular Garden Reach Rd, Calcutta, as his address.

55 . NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E177/4, Campbell to Indian Unions, 9 March 1946.

56 . Fitzpatrick and Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia*, p. 170.

57 . NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E177/4, Campbell for ISUiA to a number of Indian Seamen's and other unions, 9 March 1946.

58 . J. Hooke, Labor Council, *Daily Telegraph*, 3 November 1945.

59 . Fitzpatrick and Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia*, p. 183.

60 . *Tribune*, 12 October 1945. Quote is from the caption text. My emphasis.

61 . NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E 177/4 Campbell for ISUiA to NSW Trades and Labour Council, 29 January 1946; E 177/5, to NSW Trades and Labour Council 4 February 1946; E 177/4 to Indian Unions, 9 March 1946.

62 . Balachandran, 'Searching for the Sardar'.

63 . Tabili, 'We Ask for British Justice'.

64 . Broeze, 'The Muscles of Empire', p. 55.

65 . Dated CDCs located among Calcutta seafarers' families in the course of our research during 2007.

66. NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E 177/5, Draft speech, nd.
67. NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E 177/5, 13.1.46, notes for speech by Hussain.
68. Interview Phyllis Johnson, 10 May 2007. Phyllis recorded the key elements of this story with Jan Lingard in the mid-1990s, but expanded it in this recent interview. Rupert Lockwood's account, in *Black Armada*, pp. 151-152 supports Phyllis's memory, as do the archives of the ISUiA.
69. Tabili, 'We Ask for British Justice', pp. 161-177.
70. Hardjono and Warner, *In Love with a Nation*, p. 39; Lockwood, *Black Armada*, p. 101, report of alert on 25 September that the Dutch would be attempting to load munitions.
71. NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E177/5, CHC, to Indian Seamen's Unions on behalf of Dasrath Singh, 31 January 1946.
72. Lockwood, *Black Armada*, p. 152; NBAC, ISUiA E177/4, Campbell for ISUiA to Hon. R.A. King, MLC and Sec., NSW Trades and Labor Council, 29 January 1946.
73. Hardjono and Warner, *In Love with a Nation*; Lockwood, *Black Armada*, pp. 136-144.
74. There were small numbers of Vietnamese and Chinese seamen also present and acting in support of the boycott. Some of the Vietnamese seamen were jailed late in 1945 in the course of the dispute. The Chinese Seamen's Union in Australia, set up as above in 1942, was strongly supportive of the boycott. Lockwood, *Black Armada*, p. 170.
75. *Tribune*, 30 October 1945
76. Balachandran, 'Cultures of Protest in Transnational Contexts'; Martínez, "'Coolies" to Comrades'.
77. Lockwood, *Black Armada*, pp. 161-163; *Tribune*, 23 October 1945
78. *Tribune*, 23 October 1945
79. Interviews with Jack Mullins, 2 March 2007; Sylvia Mullins, 13 March 2007; and Phyllis Johnson, 10 May 2007; photographs in *Tribune*, 12 October 1945; 6 November 1945, 9 November 1945, 23 November 1945.
80. *Tribune*, 23 October 1945; 30 October 1945, pp 2, 6.
81. Both quotes from transcript of interview with Jack Mullins recorded by the author, 2 March 2007. Another incident of harassment of Singh by Dutch security personnel is reported in *Tribune*, 9 November 1945.
82. *Tribune*, 27 November 1945, p. 8.
83. *Tribune*, 23 October 1945; 30 October 1945.
84. NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E 177/4, Campbell for ISUiA to Indian Unions, 1 Mar 1946.
85. Interview Phyllis Johnson, recorded 10 May 2007.
86. Lockwood, *Black Armada*, p. 164 and still photo from *Indonesia Calling* on plate opposite p. 184. Note the erroneous caption which is discussed in next section.
87. Lockwood, *Black Armada*, pp. 164-165
88. *Daily Mirror*, 19 December 1945; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 December 1945
89. NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E177/4, Campbell for ISUiA to WWF, Ironworkers Union, Seamen's Union, ALP, Indonesian Seamen's Union, 8 April 1946.
90. *Tribune*, 11 December 1945, report of deputation to Indian High Commissioner by ISUiA, supported by WWF, TLC, Boilermakers' and Seamen's Unions, to demand repatriation and to protest vs harassment and negligence by Indian Welfare Officer; NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E 177/5, Campbell for ISUiA to Indian High Commissioner, 13 July 1946; to Jawaharlal Nehru and to M.A. Jinnah, 5 March 1947.
91. *Tribune*, 30 October 1945.
92. NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E177/4, ISUiA to Waterside Workers, NSW and Federal, Ironworkers Federal, Seamen's Federal, ALP [Sharkey], Indonesian Seamen's Union.
93. NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E177/4, Central Committee, Indonesian Seamen's Union to ISUiA 10 April 1946.
94. This is reported by Lockwood (*Black Armada*), Martínez (2001) and others to be in *The Seamen's Journal*, vol. IV, no. 11, August 1946. Despite searching, this item has not yet been confirmed, but it will undoubtedly be conserved in the SUA archives.
95. NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E177/4, Personal letter from Clarie Campbell to Mr and Mrs Johnson c/- D.G. Johnson, PO Stuart, via Townsville, Qld, 6 March 1946
96. Lockwood, *Black Armada*, pp. 209-214
97. NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E177/5, Campbell for ISUiA to Indian High Commissioner Sir Raghunath Paranjapye. 13 July 1946.
98. Martínez, "'Coolies" to Comrades', 2001.
99. NBAC, ISUiA Archives, E177/5, Campbell for ISUiA to Indian High Commissioner Sir Raghunath Paranjapye. 13 July 1946.

Acknowledgements

Many people have generously offered comments and suggestions on this project and on the draft paper to bring it to this stage although the responsibility for its conclusions is my own. My thanks go to Anjali Roy, HariPriya

Rangan, Paul Torzillo, Devleena Ghosh, Drew Cottle, Rowan Cahill, Jim Masselos, Jan Lingard, Samia Hossain, Suchetana Chattopadhyay, Duncan Waterson, Michael Pearson, G. Balachandran, Robert Haworth, Abdulgani Serang and Mahesh Rangarajan. Researchers Titas Chakraborty and Prakriti Mitra in Kolkata and Lindi Todd in Sydney have contributed important analytical insights as well as committed research assistance while Allison Cadzow has given valuable editorial advice. The staff of the Noel Butlin Archive Centre have been generous with their careful, patient and professional assistance. The two anonymous referees for this journal have offered both important insights and suggestions of fruitful resources. Above all, I am indebted to Jack and Pat Mullins, to Sylvia Mullins Cross and to Phyllis Johnson, who took part in these events and wanted the story told.

Bibliography

Interviews to date [November 2007]

Jack Mullins 2nd March 2007, Glebe.

Sylvia Mullins 13th March 2007, Normanhurst.

Phyllis Johnson 10th May and 16th November, 2007, Padstow.

Archives and Primary sources:

C.H.Campbell papers. Archive Deposit number: P81, 1944 – 1947 (Noel Butlin Archive of Business & Labour, [NBBL] within the Archives Library of the Australian National University)
Indian Seamen's Union in Australia Archive Deposit number: E177, 1945 – 1949 (Noel Butlin Archive of Business & Labour [NBBL] in Archives Library of the Australian National University)
Australian Security Intelligence Organisation [ASIO] CAMPBELL, Clarence Hart 'Steve'. 1933 – 1947 Vol 1-5 [Barcode: 12155800; Series A6119/79. Opened with exception: 6 Jun 1997] National Archives of Australia [NAA], online: <http://www.naa.gov.au/>
Report P&O Board of Directors 2 June 1900: Report on employment of Indian Seamen, archived at <http://www.lascars.co.uk>
Jones, J.P. 1931: 'Lascars in the Port of London', *P.L.A. Monthly February 1931*, archived at <http://www.lascars.co.uk/plafeb1931.html>

Newspapers, journals and film: 1945-1948

Daily Mirror

Daily Telegraph

Indonesia Calling. A film directed by Joris Ivens and produced by the Waterside Workers' Federation Film Unit 1946. Held National Film & Sound Archive.

Sun

Sydney Morning Herald

The Seamen's Journal: the journal of the Seamen's Union of Australasia
Tribune

Books and Journal articles

Ahluwalia, Pal: 'When does a settler become a native?: Citizenship and Identity in a Settler Society', *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 10(1) 2001
Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. (first published 1972): *Java in a time of revolution: occupation and resistance 1944-1946*, Equinox Publishing, Jakarta & Singapore 2006
Anderson, Benedict R.O'G. (first published 1983), : *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso. (rev ed) 1991
Balachandran, Gopalan. "Circulation through Seafaring: Indian Seamen 1890 - 1945." In *Society and Circulation: Mobile Peoples and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia, 1750-1950*, edited by Claude Markovits, Jacques Pouchepadass and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 89-130. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003.
———. "Cultures of Protest in Transnational Contexts: Indian Seamen Abroad, 1885-1945." In *(Indian Ocean - Leiden Conf)*, edited by Devleena Ghosh and Stephen Muecke, 2007 (forthcoming).
———. "Searching for the Sardar: The State, Pre-Capitalist Institutions and Human Agency in the Maritime Labour Market, Calcutta, 1880-1935." In *Institutions and Economic Change in South Asia*, edited by Burton Stein and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 206-36. Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1996.
Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi. "Introduction to Coolies, Capital and Colonialism: Studies in Indian Labour History." *International Review of Social History* 51, no. Supplement 14 December (2006): 7-19.

- Bayly, Christopher and Tim Harper 2004: *Forgotten Armies: The fall of British Asia, 1941-1945*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- . 2007: *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire*, Allen Lane/Penguin, London
- Beasley, Margo 1996: *Wharfies: A history of the Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia*, Halstead Press, Sydney.
- [Blainey, Geoffrey 1968](#): *The tyranny of distance : how distance shaped Australia's history*, St. Martin's Press: Melbourne ; London : Macmillan; New York.
- Bose, Sugata 2006: *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the age of global empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass.
- Bose, Sugata and Ayesha Jalal 2004: *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, Routledge Kegan Paul, New York (first published 1997 Delhi)
- Brewer, Jeffrey D., R. Sakthivadivel, and K. V. Raju 1997: *Water distribution rules and water distribution performance: A case study in the Tambraparani Irrigation System*. Research Report 12. Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Irrigation Management Institute. <http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/pubs/PUB012/RR012.htm>
- Broeze, Frank. *Island Nation: A History of Australians and the Sea*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin 1998.
- . "The Muscles of Empire - Indian Seamen and the Raj 1919 - 1939." *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 1 (1981): 43-67.
- Bull, Tas 1998: *Life on the Waterfront*, Harper Collins, Sydney
- Burgmann, Meredith 1973: 'Australian Attitudes to Russia 1945-1949' unpublished MA in Government, University of Sydney.
- Burgmann, Verity 1995: *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: the Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.
- Caldwell, Malcolm and Ernst Utrecht 1979: *Indonesia : an alternative history*, Alternative Publishing, Chippendale, Sydney.
- Chatterjee, Partha 1986: *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota.
- Chatterjee, Partha, 1993: *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ
- Chaudhuri, K.N. 1985: *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Cahill, Rowan 1998: *Sea Change: an essay in maritime labour history*, Rowan Cahill: Sydney
- Coast, John 1952: *Recruit to Revolution: Adventure and Politics in Indonesia*, Christophers, London, pp 185-186.
- Cooke, Miriam and Bruce B. Lawrence (eds) 2005: *Muslim Networks: From Medieval Scholars to Modern Feminists*, Permanent Black, Delhi.
- Cottle, Drew and Angela Keys, 2006: 'From Colonial Film Commissioner to Political Pariah: Joris Ivens and the Making of Indonesia Calling', conference paper, *Film and History*, Melbourne.
- Curthoys, Ann: 'Constructing national histories', in Bain Attwood and Stephen Foster, eds, *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, NMA, 2003, pp. 185-200
- Elkins, Caroline and Susan Pedersen (eds) 2005: *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century*, Routledge, New York and London.
- Fitzpatrick, Brian and Rowan J. Cahill 1981: *The Seamen's Union of Australia: 1872-1972. A History*. The Seamen's Union of Australia, Sydney.
- Deshpande, Anirudh 1989: 'Sailors and the crowd: popular protest in Karachi, 1946' in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 26 (1) 1-28.
- Deshpande, Anirudh 1996: 'Hopes and disillusionment: Recruitment, demobilisation and the emergence of discontent in the Indian armed forces after the Second World War, in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 33 (2) 175-207
- Doulton, A.J.F. 1950: *The Fighting Cock: being the history of the 23rd Indian Division, 1942-1947*, The Naval and Military Press Ltd, Uckfield, UK
- Ewald, Janet J. 2000: 'Crossers of the Sea: Slaves, Freedmen, and Other Migrants in the Northwestern Indian Ocean, c. 1750-1914', *The American Historical Review* Vol. 105, Issue 1, (26 pages)
- Fitzpatrick, Brian and Rowan Cahill 1981: *The Seamen's Union of Australia: 1872-1972. A History*, The Seamen's Union of Australia, Sydney.
- Ghosh, Devleena and Stephen Muecke 2000: 'Indian Ocean Stories' in *The Indian Ocean*, special edition of the *UTS Review*, 6 (2) 24-43.
- Goodall, Heather 1995: "'Saving The Children': Gender and the Colonization of Aboriginal Children in NSW, 1788 to 1990" in the *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 2 [44] pp6-9.
- . "Rewriting Green History." Paper presented at the Ideas in Action Social Inquiry Seminar Series, UTS, April 28 2006.
- Goodall, Heather, Devleena Ghosh and Lindi Todd: "Jumping Ship: Skirting Empire. Indians, Aborigines and Australians across the Indian Ocean," *Trans/forming Cultures eJournal* 3 (2007 (forthcoming)).
- Hardjono, Joan, and Charles Warner. *In Love with a Nation: Molly Bondan and Indonesia*. Picton: Charles Warner, 1995.
- Hasan, Mushirul [ed] 2000: *Inventing boundaries : gender, politics and the partition of India*, New Delhi ; Oxford : Oxford University Press. Prologue: 'India's Partition Revisited', pp 1-25.

-
- Headrick, Daniel R. 1981: *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford
- Hourani, George F. 1995 (first pub 1951) *Arab Seafaring*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Lockwood, Rupert 1982: *Black Armada: Australia and the struggle for Indonesian independence 1942-49*, Halstead Press, Sydney
- Noorani, A.G., 2005: *Indian Political Trials 1775-1947*, Oxford Uni Press, New Delhi
- Northrup, D., 1995: *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, NY, Melbourne
- Lingard, Jan. "The Beginings of a Relationship: Indonesians in Australia 1942-47." *Meanjin* 57, no. 3 (1998): 541-52.
- . "The First Asian Boat People." *Inside Indonesia* Oct-Dec (2001): 21-22.
- Lockwood, Rupert: 1982: *Black Armada: Australia and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence 1942-49* Sydney: Hale and Iremonger
- Macintyre, Stuart 1999: *The Reds: the Communist Party of Australia from origins to illegality*. St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.
- Martínez, Julia 2001: "'Coolies' to Comrades: Internationalism between Australian and Asian Seamen' in Raymond Markey (ed) *Labour and Community: Historical Essays*, University of Wollongong Press, Wollongong, pp 295-312.
- . 'The end of Indenture? Asian workers in the Australian Pearlring Industry, 1901 – 1972' in *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 67, Spring 2005, pp 125-147.
- Masselos, Jim 1991: *Indian nationalism: a history*, Sterling New Delhi, second ed.
- Masselos, Jim 1992: 'Changing Definitions of Bombay: city state to capital city' , p 293 in Banga, Indu [ed] *Ports and their Hinterlands, 1700-1950*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, pp 273-316
- Miller, Michael B. "Pilgrims' Progress: The Business of the Haj." *Past and Present* 191, no. May (2006): 189-228.
- Moses, Dirk [ed] 2005: *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Aboriginal Children in Australian History* New York: Berghahn Books.
- Mukherjee, Rudrangshu and Lakshmi Subramanian (eds) 1998: *Politics and Trade in the Indian Ocean World*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Mundell, Ian. *Joris Ivens, Biography*, nd.
- Pearson, M.N. 2000: 'Consolidating the Faith: Muslim Travellers in the Indian Ocean World' in *The Indian Ocean*, special edition of the *UTS Review*, 6(2) 6-13.
- Quinlan, Michael. "Industrial Relations before Unions: New South Wales Seamen 1810 - 1852." *Journal of Industrial Relations* 38, no. 2 (1996): 264-93.
- Ross, Edgar 1993: *An Autobiographical Sketch*, Sydney, online http://www.cpa.org.au/special/ross_biog.doc
- Sareen, T.A. 1988: *Select Documents on Indian National Army*, Agam Prakashan, Delhi
- Stoler, Ann Laura 1988: 'Working the Revolution: Plantation Laborers and the People's Militia in North Sumatra' *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (May, 1988), pp. 227-247
- Vickers, Adrian 2005: *A History of Modern Indonesia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Subramanian, Ajantha 2002: 'Community, Place and Citizenship' *Seminar*, no. 516
- Subramanian, Lakshmi 2000: 'Of Pirates and Potentates: Maritime Jurisdiction and the Construction of Piracy in the Indian Ocean' in *The Indian Ocean*, special edition of the *UTS Review*, 6 (2) 14-23
- Tabili, Laura. *"We Ask for British Justice": Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain*. New York: Cornell, 1994.
- Veracini, Lorenzo: "The evolution of historical re-description in Israel and Australia and the question of the 'founding violence'", *Australian Historical Studies*, 122, 2003, pp326-345.
- Visram, Rozina 1986: *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700-1947*, Pluto Press, London